

Today, the House passed Rep. Braley's provision to provide National Guard members with the benefits they deserve.

June 25, 2009

Washington, DC - Today, Rep. Bruce Braley (D-Iowa) announced that his Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act (HR 1222) was included in the FY2010 National Defense Authorization Act, which passed the House today by a vote of 389-22. The language would fix a problem in the provision of benefits for National Guard members.

Braley's fix would ensure that all National Guard troops are provided benefits they were promised under the Department of Defense's Post Deployment and Mobilization Respite Absence (PDMRA) program, commonly known as "Respite Leave." Over 20,000 Army National Guard members—including an estimated 800 Iowa National Guard members—did not receive benefits they earned due to a delay between the announcement of the leave program by the Department of Defense and the establishment of the program by the individual services.

"Today's legislation will allow National Guard members to receive the benefits they are due," Braley said. "A bureaucratic glitch should not prevent our troops from receiving the benefits they earned. This important change will ensure that our soldiers promptly receive the benefits they were promised by the Pentagon."

Respite Leave was designed to provide service members deployed to places like Iraq and Afghanistan for longer than established rotation cycles additional help to reintegrate back to civilian life, as well as to improve the retention of service members who had experienced especially long tours of duty.

Once the Respite Leave program was announced, however, there were significant delays before its implementation. The Department of the Army, for example, didn't issue its corresponding policy for implementing Respite Leave until more than six months after the Pentagon's January 2007 announcement of the program.

During this gap, thousands of soldiers from the National Guard and Army Reserve did not

receive proper Respite Leave compensation.

Braley's provision would retroactively grant a \$200 per day benefit to the soldiers who were excluded from the benefit during the implementation delay.

Braley first introduced the Guaranteed Benefits for Our Troops Act last July.